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10/31/62

PROPOSED ANSWER TO QUESTION AT PRESIDENTIAL  
PRESS CONFERENCE RE ASSURANCES AGAINST  
INVASION OF CUBA

I believe my letter of October 27 to Chairman  
Khrushchev speaks for itself. It should, of course, be  
read in the light of my statement to the press on Septem-  
ber 13 and of our obligations under the Rio Treaty.

(President should make this statement only in response  
to a question and should thereafter stand on this statement.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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## PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON CUBA

Press Conference  
September 13, 1962

Following is the transcript of President Kennedy's news conference yesterday:

**THE PRESIDENT:** I have a preliminary statement.

There has been a great deal of talk on the situation in Cuba in recent days both in the Communist camp and in our own, and I would like to take this opportunity to set the matter in perspective.

In the first place, it is Mr. Castro and his supporters who are in trouble. In the last year, his regime has been increasingly isolated from this Hemisphere. His name no longer inspires the same fear or following in other Latin American countries. He has been condemned by the OAS, excluded from the Inter-American Defense Board, and kept out of the Inter-American Free Trade Association. By his own monumental economic mismanagement, supplemented by our refusal to trade with him, his economy has crumbled, and his pledges for economic progress have been discarded, along with his pledges for political freedom. His industries are stagnating, his harvests are declining, his own followers are beginning to see that their revolution has been betrayed.

So it is not surprising that in a frantic effort to bolster his regime he should try to arouse the Cuban people by charges of an imminent American invasion, and commit himself still further to a Soviet take-over in the hope of preventing his own collapse.

Ever since communism moved into Cuba in 1958, Soviet technical and military personnel have moved steadily onto the island in increasing numbers at the invitation of the Cuban government.

Now that movement has been increased. It is under our most careful surveillance. But I will repeat the conclusion that I reported last week, that these new shipments do not constitute a serious threat to any other part of this hemisphere.

If the United States ever should find it necessary to take military action against communism in Cuba, all of Castro's Communist-supplied weapons and technicians would not change the result or significantly extend the time required to achieve that result.

However, unilateral military intervention on the part of the United States cannot currently be either required or justified, and it is regrettable that loose talk about such action in this country might serve to give a thin color of legitimacy to the Communist pretense that such a threat exists. But let me make this clear once again: If at any time the Communist build-up in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way, including our base at Guantanamo, our passage to the Panama Canal, our missile and space activities at Cape Canaveral, or the lives of American citizens in this country, or if Cuba should ever attempt to export its aggressive purposes by force or the threat of force against any nation in this hemisphere, or become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies.

We shall be alert, too, and fully capable of dealing swiftly with any such development. As President and Commander-in-Chief I have

full authority now to take such action, and I have asked the Congress to authorize me to call up reserve forces should this or any other crisis make it necessary.

In the meantime, we intend to do everything within our power to prevent such a threat from coming into existence. Our friends in Latin America must realize the consequences such developments hold out for their own peace and freedom, and we shall be making further proposals to them. Our friends in NATO must realize the implications of their ships engaging in the Cuban trade.

We shall continue to work with Cuban refugee leaders who are dedicated as we are to that nation's future return to freedom. We shall continue to keep the American people and the Congress fully informed. We shall increase our surveillance of the whole Caribbean area. We shall neither initiate nor permit aggression in this hemisphere.

With this in mind, while I recognize that rash talk is cheap, particularly on the part of those who do not have the responsibility, I would hope that the future record will show that the only people talking about a war or an invasion at this time are the Communist spokesmen in Moscow and Havana, and that the American people defending as we do so much of the free world, will in this nuclear age, as they have in the past, keep both their nerve and their head.

### **Offensive Action**

**Q:** Mr. President, coupling this statement with the one of last week, at what point do you determine that the Buildup in Cuba has lost its

defensive character and become offensive? Would it take an overt act?

**A:** I think if you read last week's statement and the statement today, I made it quite clear, particularly in last week's statement, when we talked about the presence of offensive military missile capacity or development of military base and other indications which I gave last week, all those would, of course, indicate a change in the nature of the threat.

### **Monroe Doctrine**

**Q:** Well, Mr. President, in this same line, have you set for yourself any rule or set of conditions at which you will determine that the existence of an offensive rather than a defensive force in Cuba, and in that same connection in your reading of the Monroe Doctrine, how do you define intervention? Will it require force to contravene the Monroe Doctrine or does the presence of a foreign power in any force, but not using that force in this hemisphere, amount to contravention of the Doctrine?

**A:** Well, I have indicated that if Cuba should possess a capacity to carry out offensive action against the United States, that the United States would act. I have also indicated that the United States would not permit Cuba to export its power by force in the hemisphere. The United States will make appropriate military judgments after consultation with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others, after carefully analyzing whatever new information comes in, as to whether that point has been reached where an offensive threat does exist. And at that time the country and the Congress will be so notified.